Free lesson plan · Goal 1 · No Poverty

1 What does everyone need?

Ages 6–10 · 45 minutes



Illustration by Noemí Villamuza, from The Tree Woman · © Noemí Villamuza

The story · *The Tree Woman*

Abril, a girl who slips into her secret hideaway, closes her eyes and lets her imagination run wild, builds this story around Wangari Maathai. A woman steps off a bus at the edge of a Kenyan village where the trees have gone: the ground is dry and bare, the ponds are empty holes, the women walk further every day for firewood and water, and the children are skin and bones. Wangari will not stand by. She walks to the forest of the oldest trees, asks the earth for permission and digs up seven sprouts to plant in her garden. First the old woman across the road joins her, then the village women, who sew tents from rags to germinate seeds while the men mock them. Wangari then knocks on the door of the sawmill owner and the local authorities. Can a handful of sprouts change a whole village? The book closes with the real Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement she founded.

Written by Ricardo Alcántara · Illustrated by Noemí Villamuza

Discussion question

Why are there no trees near the village when Wangari arrives? What has happened to the ponds and streams?

Learning objectives

- Sort at least 8 picture cards into ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ and explain one choice.
- Name 3 things every child needs to live well (for example food, clean water, a safe home, school, health care).
- Suggest one way a community can help a family that does not have enough.

You need

- Needs-and-wants picture cards (drawn quickly or cut from old magazines), one set per group of 3–4
- Two hoops, trays or sheets of paper labelled NEED and WANT for each group
- Sticky notes or scrap paper
- Board or flip chart

Key words

need — something you must have to live and be healthy

want — something nice to have, but you can live without it

poverty — not having enough money or support to get what you need

share — to give some of what you have to others

community — the people who live, learn and work near you

fair — when everyone gets a real chance

Curriculum links

Science: Living things and their basic needs (food, water, shelter, warmth).

Geography: Homes and communities around the world; places that help people locally.

Citizenship: Fairness, sharing and caring for others; children's rights (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Maths: Sorting and simple tally charts; counting how many cards are in each group.

Language: Speaking and listening: giving a reason with 'because'.

UNESCO ESD competency: Normative competency (thinking about what is fair)

Lesson steps

Desert-island backpack · 8 minutes

Teacher

- Tell the story of Sam, a child who must pack a small backpack for a long journey and can only take 5 things.
- Show 10 picture cards on the board (water, bread, coat, toy car, medicine, games console, blanket, sweets, book, football) and ask pupils to choose 5.
- Collect a few choices and ask 'Why did you choose that one?'

Pupils

- Choose 5 items for Sam with a partner.
- Give one reason using 'because'.

Needs and wants sort · 17 minutes

Teacher

- Give each group a card set and two labelled hoops or sheets.
- Model one card aloud: 'Water is a need because our bodies cannot live without it.'
- Circulate and ask groups about tricky cards (a coat, a bicycle, a phone): is it a need everywhere, or only sometimes?
- Bring the class together: what do all the NEED cards have in common? Draw out that needs keep us alive, healthy, safe and learning.
- Explain simply: in our world, some families do not have enough for all their needs. This is called poverty. It is not their fault, and communities can help.

Pupils

- Sort the cards together, taking turns to place a card and give a reason.
- Put any cards you disagree about in the middle and talk about them.
- Count the cards in each group and record a simple tally.

Class quiz on SDG 1 · 12 minutes

eco-heroes.org/trivia/?sdg=1&diff=easy

Teacher

- Read each question aloud; give thinking time before pupils vote with a show of hands.
- Click the answer most of the class chose, then pause on the explanation and link it back to the needs-and-wants sort.

Pupils

- Listen to each question and vote with your hand.
- Explain to a partner why the answer is right.

How can we help? · 8 minutes

Teacher

- Ask: ‘Who in our community helps families who need food, clothes or support?’ (food banks, charities, neighbours, school).
- Hand out the exit ticket on a sticky note.

Pupils

- Share one helper you know about.
- Answer the exit ticket and stick it on the NEED side of the board.

Exit ticket

Name one thing every child needs and say why.

Model answer: Clean water, because our bodies need it to stay alive and healthy. (Any true need — food, a safe home, health care, school, love and care — with a simple reason.)

At home

Ask pupils to play ‘need or want?’ with a grown-up while shopping or watching TV, taking turns to name an item and decide together. If families like, they can try the Eco Heroes Explorer mission “🧺 Needs vs Wants” at home.

Differentiation · Support

- Use real objects or photos instead of words; pair confident readers with pupils who need support.
- Give a sentence starter: ‘___ is a need because ___.’

Differentiation · Stretch

- Ask pupils to find a card that is a need in one place but a want in another (for example a warm coat in a cold or hot country).
- Draw a ‘community helpers’ picture showing who helps when a family does not have enough.

Success criteria

- I can sort needs and wants and give a reason.
- I can name 3 things every child needs.
- I can say one way people help each other.

Handle with care

Some pupils in your class may be living with little money right now. Never ask pupils to describe their own home, income or belongings; use the fictional character instead. Keep the message that poverty is about unfair chances, not about people being lazy or less clever, and make sure no one is asked to say which group they belong to.

Free online, no account needed

- Watch the Goal 1 mission video: **eco-heroes.org/sdg/1/**
- Play the Goal 1 game chapter: **eco-heroes.org/game/**
- Play the Goal 1 trivia: **eco-heroes.org/trivia/?sdg=1**
- Read the free reading guide: **eco-heroes.org/library/the-tree-woman/**
- Goal 1 teacher pack: **eco-heroes.org/teachers/goal-1-pack/**

Sources

- UN — Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere — https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/
- UNICEF — Child poverty — https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR) — https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

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